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HOME MISSIONS.

(WESTERN SECTION.)

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

Deficits.—For years, the Home Mission Fund (Western Section) has been in an unsatisfactory state. The first year after the union the Committee reported a debt of \$9,125, and ever since it has been wiping out and dreading deficits. Why? Because the pace of the work is faster than that of the revenue. A scrimp diet never satisfies a growing boy, and the Church has kept the Home Mission Committee on short rations.

The Work.—The work entrusted to the Committee extends from Gaspé to Alberni, and includes all within the Provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, British Columbia and the North-West Territories. The Missionaries of the Committee, in these provinces, conduct services in *seven* languages, at 1,007 points, with an average Sabbath attendance of 35,779. Connected with these stations are 11,356 families, 3,734 single persons, not connected with these families, and 14,253 communicants, *i. e.* one-eighth of the families and one-sixth of the young people of the Church. From these missions are to come our new congregations, as well as the additional revenue to maintain and extend all the enterprises of the Church. Happy the Church that has her quiver full of healthy growing children, even though they may occasionally be clamorous for more funds. They are the hope of the future.

The Record.—The H. M. work has told powerfully on the growth of the Church since the Union. In 1875 there were in the Western Section, 435 self-supporting congregations, 86 augmented congregations and 169 missions; now there are 550 self-supporting, 152 augmented and 344 missions, i. e. a gain in the respective classes, of 26, 76 and 103 per cent. The Committee has thus started 356 missions in 20 years (nearly 18 a year) on the road to become self-supporting congregations; many of them have already reached their destination, and it is hoped the remainder will not fall among thieves.

Work Cannot Remain Stationary.—The work cannot continue stationary; ours is a growing country, and christian work must keep pace with settlement. No other Church has extended its work so widely, in the West, as our own, and no one has been more successful. Some argue that there is no need of such wide extension since people have their Bibles. Those who reason in this way have never visited the frontier, nor have they seen the baneful effects of neglect. A neglected Bible is a feeble religious force. And it is noticeable that those who would leave the frontier settlers to their Bibles are careful that they and their families shall have a preached gospel. Consistency!

Where are the Missions.—These Home Missions are in the wilds of Ontario and Quebec as well as on the prairies and in the mountains of the west. The farmer and rancher, the miner and railroader, the lumberman and fisherman are connected with them; and we are endeavoring to teach these people and their children to fear God and keep His commandments. And could the Church see the progress made and the good done, and witness the gratitude of the people, there would be ample compensation for her sacrifices. A glance at the more important districts may be of interest.

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Quebec.—In Quebec the work consists in nursing feeble settlements of Presbyterians and others that are being gradually squeezed out of existence by the persistent pressure of the Roman Catholic Church. Neglect in early days cost the Church dearly, let us strengthen the things that remain. Nor are we leading a forlorn hope. Look at these figures for the Presbyteries of Montreal and Quebec. At the Union 3,638 families, now 5,111; communicants, then 6,606, now 11,372, i. e., in those 19 years a gain of 40 p. c. in families and 72 p. c. in communicants. Here is hope. At present there are 44 Mission Stations, with 647 families and 874 communicants in this province; and if cared for they must form a valuable breakwater against the inroads of the Roman Catholic Church. If it is worth trying to evangelize French Canadians, surely it is worth trying to keep our own people from becoming Roman Catholics, as they have done in the past by the thousand.

Ontario.—The principal mission fields in this province are in the *Ottawa Valley*, in the rear of Kingston and in the Muskoka and Algoma districts. No better piece of H. M. work was ever done than that by the Presbyteries of Ottawa and Lanark and Renfrew. Since the Union the families increased 95 p. c. and the communicants 152 p. c. For schemes, these Presbyteries gave \$3,999 in 1875, and \$18,440 in 1894; and for all purposes \$54,574 in the former year, and \$134,121 in the latter. Allowance is made for the congregations that belonged to the Brockville Presbytery in 1875.

If the work in the rear of *Kingston* has not been equally successful, the character of the country and the policy of starving missions in winter are largely responsible. Even bears look gaunt, and feel weak after the sleep of winter.

Muskoka is supposed to be a region of rock, lake and forest, and hence better suited for the axe, the rod and the gun than the mower or reaper, and yet settlers have cleared the forest and created homes for

themselves and their families; and under the efficient superintendency of Mr. Findlay, our Church has made surprising progress. In 1875 we had only 8 missions with 16 stations, and in 1894, 36 missions with 105 stations; and this after 8 missions had become congregations.

Algoma was almost wholly under the care of Knox College Missionary Society in 1875, so new and unorganized was our work there. In these 19 years, our 3 insignificant missions have grown into 3 congregations, and 31 missions with 107 stations; and the Presbytery reports 1,211 families, 401 single persons and 1,384 communicants. The construction of railways through these districts is to aid materially in their development.

Western Canada.—The country between Lake Superior and the Pacific Ocean may be taken together. Here the growth has been steady and satisfactory. Settlement has been slow but quite fast enough to tax the resources of the committee. The work is Catholic in spirit, Icelanders and Scandinavians, Germans and Hungarians being cared for and Celts and Saxons not overlooked. The Church would be strengthened and enriched by a generous infusion of blood from Northern Europe. West of Lake Superior we had 2 congregations in 1875 and 81 in 1894. The missions increased from 14 to 166, and the preaching stations, in both, from 35 to 782. Since the Union, our families, which numbered 537, have increased, more than 20 fold and communicants more than 30 fold. For schemes \$380 were given in 1875 and \$16,673 in 1894; and for all purposes the figures for the respective years were \$6,725 and \$268,535. In 1875 the West gave only about two-thirds of one per cent. of the revenue of the Church, and in 1894 about 12½ per cent.

Samples from Note-book.—Mission begun in mining village. In 3 years mission self-sustaining, church and manse built, and congregation undertake

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to contribute annually at least \$250.00 to support a missionary elsewhere. . . . Work begun in another village, people indifferent, some hostile; in three years church, costing \$3,000 built, and people contribute \$800.00 a year for salary. . . . Last spring a missionary sent to a new farming district, far from market and railways, found about 150 families without any missionary. In the autumn a member of Presbytery dispensed ordinances, and 38 children were baptized and 43 admitted to the full communion of the Church. . . . Mission started in a rural district, three stations, people long neglected, Lord's supper observed at one point, 22 present, who at one time had been communicants in Scotland or Eastern Canada in the Presbyterian Church, and yet no one felt he could accept the general invitation of the pastor—the past held them back—and the ordinance was celebrated by the missionary and his wife. . . . Mining and ranching locality visited; people found farming 3500 feet above sea level, with wheat, oats and barley ripening. With a notice of a couple of hours, seats erected in a poplar grove and an audience of over 40 gathered. They begged for a Sabbath service, and pleaded for good offices in getting a school for their children. The government interviewed; a school house built next spring, and school started. What about the service? . . . A camp visited; "Do you keep the Lord's Day here?" "Shure an' we would if we only knew what day it was; but nayther prayst nor parson comes here and we get lawst. I have not heard a sermon for 13 years. An' shure an' the Father of us all will make allowance for fellows like us." We trust He may, but will He make allowance for us if we neglect them?

Instances.—Tour through mining district when several villages and camps visited. Village No. 1—Population 750; 1 church (Presbyterian); 15 saloons, open night and day, every day in the week; base play-house, gambling hells and other stations on the road to perdition. Not one-third of the people attend

Church. No. 2—Population 225; no church, no service; one attempted, attendance on first occasion 3, next 1; service discontinued. Manager of Real Estate Co'y asked for site for a church, he replied, "You cannot serve God and mammon; we are here to serve mammon, and what is the use of humbugging about a church." Service to be started there in spring. No. 3—Population 1100; 3 churches; never more than one-tenth of population in church at the same time; 18 drinking places, gambling saloons and still viler resorts. No. 4—Population 2,200; 1 church (Presbyterian), 14 saloons, with fouler dens. No. 5—Reached on Sabbath evening; horse-racing that day, with drinking, gambling and darker deeds attendant on such exhibitions. In such localities, population largely from mining districts to the south. Capital, miners, trade largely American, about 35 p. c. Canadian. In all these places superior Christian men and women met, the very salt of society; shall we not make it easier for them and others to live honest, sober and clean lives amidst such uncongenial surroundings? And shall we not extend a hand to raise the fallen? The mineral wealth of British Columbia is attracting capital and population, let us not stay our hand.

Results.—The effect of Christian work on the West has been most marked. Everywhere east of the Rockies, the Sabbath is as well kept as in Ontario. Life and property are respected in all the land; while the population increased 153 p. c. between 1881 and 1891, the actual number of convictions in Manitoba decreased. If farther west the conditions are not so satisfactory, the Churches are largely to blame. The moral condition is however rapidly changing for the better.

The Missionaries doing the work.—The Missionaries serving the Church are not only faithful and conscientious in the discharge of duty, but able ministers of the New Testament in every sense—they

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are not the culls of more critical tastes. Of the 55 ministers in the large Missionary Presbyteries of Minnedosa, Regina, Calgary and Kamloops, 38 are graduates in Arts or Theology. That they are acceptable preachers we know by the heavy drain made on us by American congregations. And even Lindsay, Toronto and other centres of light and leading do not hesitate to recruit their ranks from our staff. And one can scarcely wonder that calls are accepted when he knows how missionaries are paid.

Salaries.—The salary now—it used to be higher, in name—of an ordained, unmarried missionary, in the Synod of Manitoba and the North-west is \$700—and of a married missionary \$750 and a manse. Of this amount, part is promised by the people and part by the H. M. C. If the people can pay their share, well; if not, the missionary stands to lose. In the past, the missionary could depend on the part of the salary promised by the H. M. C.; it would appear now that this is as uncertain as the rest—it is all muskeg—no sure footing. Let me give a few instances. The salary of a catechist was \$600, and one of them with a family paid house rent, kept a horse and supported a family on \$445, another on \$440, and another \$363. One minister paid house rent and supported a family on \$705, another \$468, another \$607, another \$542, another \$570, another \$572, and another \$420. The rest of the salary lost. Shall the Church not make the burden lighter for these missionaries?

An unmarried missionary, an M.A., who took first-class honors in the exit examination of the Free Church of Scotland in 1893, got last year \$296, and yet no one heard him complain. He preached recently in one of the Winnipeg Churches and, by request, gave a short account of his field and work. So pleased were the people with the man and his work, that of their own accord they promptly voted assistance for removing debt from the church.

Amount Required.—The Assembly asks the Church for \$78,000 to meet the necessities of this work. Shall it be forthcoming? Last year about \$71,000 was given, but \$10,000 of it was in response to a special appeal in April. This appeal cannot be repeated. If the money is not forthcoming, missionaries must lose part of their salary and extension must stop. And if we fall behind settlement, can we catch up later? No. What will Manitoba itself do? All it can; but with 3 bushels of wheat selling for \$1.00 there is not much money in the crop for the farmer. To succeed, our giving must be general and generous.

How to get it.—Let the people get the facts from the pulpit, many do not read circulars. Let all give in proportion to their ability; let wealthier members give special contributions. Let Young People's Societies and C. E. Societies help.

Reasons.—Is there any investment of mission money that can show more gratifying results than that spent for home work? Is there any investment that promises larger, surer or speedier returns for the future? Does not patriotism demand that we Canadianize the foreigner, and help to make and keep our land Christian, from ocean to ocean? Are parents with children in the West prepared to leave them to blighting and blasting forces? Are not our young people jealous for the good name of their native land? Are we not all our brother's keeper? If souls are lost shall our skirts be spotless if we hold back? When the facts are known the Church may be expected to meet the need. The love of Christ constrains His people.

Additional copies of this leaflet can be had on application to the REV DR. WARDEN, Montreal.

By instruction of the H. M. Committee,

J. ROBERTSON.

WINNIPEG, MAN., Jan., 1896.





